



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

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New York

*Provisional*

*President:* Mr. Montalvo Sosa/Mr. De la Gasca López Domínguez . . . (Ecuador)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. França Danese
China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Ms. Hackman
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Yamanaka
Malta . . . . .	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. Matar
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Denmark, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director for Coordination, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Her Excellency Mrs. Hedda Samson, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

**Mr. Jenča:** The cold winter weather has arrived in war-torn Ukraine. Intensifying Russian attacks on the country's energy facilities, amid heavy snow and freezing temperatures, are worsening the dire humanitarian conditions across the country. Since the previous time I briefed the Security Council, two weeks ago (see S/PV.9483), we have continued to see daily reports of attacks on Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure, many resulting in civilian casualties.

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has verified 10,065 civilians killed and 18,679 injured. The actual figures are likely considerably higher. Most civilian casualties continued to be caused by shelling and multiple-launch rocket systems in areas near the front line. However, attacks recently escalated on populated areas across the country. On 25 November,

Kyiv came under the most significant drone attack in months. The extensive presence of explosive remnants of war and mines continues to have a significant impact on civilians and their livelihoods, more so in rural areas and agricultural lands. Since August, they killed 31 people and injured 98, mostly men and boys. All attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure must stop immediately. They are prohibited under international humanitarian law and are simply unacceptable.

As a result of the war, 10 million people have been forced to flee their homes, including 3.7 million internally displaced persons and over 6.3 million refugees recorded globally. While we can attempt to count the numbers of those killed, injured or displaced, the full lasting toll of this devastating war on the civilian population is beyond measure. In addition to the lives lost, families torn apart and life-changing physical injuries, the impact of the war on the mental health of millions of Ukrainians will be felt for decades to come.

Children often suffer the greatest lasting trauma in any conflict. In Ukraine, they also face major disruptions in access to basic health and education, which will impact their lives for years. The fighting has damaged or destroyed hundreds of schools and health and medical facilities. Given the security situation, only half of the 3.9 million children in the territory under Ukraine's control have attended school in person full-time since the start of the school year.

Due to the war, women in Ukraine face a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Increased poverty rates caused by the war also affect women more than men. Women face a greater amount of domestic and unpaid care work due to family separation, lack of childcare facilities and school closures. Yet, since the beginning of the war, women have also taken on new vital roles in their communities. Most front-line workers, volunteers and first responders in Ukraine are women.

As long as the war continues, all four of Ukraine's nuclear power plants remain at risk. On Saturday, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant — Europe's largest nuclear power plant, located dangerously close to the front line — suffered a complete off-site power outage. That was the eighth time since the start of the invasion. Last Wednesday, the IAEA team at the Khmelnytskyi nuclear power plant, in western Ukraine,

reported hearing several explosions close to the plant. The plant was not directly affected; yet the incident was a reminder of the risks faced by Ukrainian nuclear sites, even those away from active combat. All nuclear sites must be able to operate safely and must be protected to avoid potentially catastrophic consequences.

Despite the reports of increasing shipments in the Black Sea, the war continues to pose significant risks to civilian navigation and to Ukraine's grain export capacity. Since 11 July, OHCHR has recorded 32 attacks that damaged or destroyed grain production and export facilities in territory of Ukraine under Ukrainian control. Russian attacks hit port facilities, grain silos and vehicles for transporting grain. Most attacks affected infrastructure in the Odesa region, where the Black Sea and Danube River ports are located. Following the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, those attacks have substantially reduced the capacity of Ukraine to export food. With so many facilities damaged and export routes curtailed, the cost of logistics is rising.

Much like last year, the year 2023 has been devastating for the people of Ukraine. If urgent steps are not taken to reverse that trajectory, next year may be even more unpredictable and destructive. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on all Member States to do their part to lay the groundwork for peace — peace that is in line with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and resolutions of the General Assembly.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rajasingham.

**Mr. Rajasingham**: As the Council has just heard from Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, civilians in Ukraine, including women and children, continue to pay a high price for the war. If the brutal impact of more than 21 months of fighting since February 2022 were not enough, millions of children, women and men are now faced with the prospect of yet another winter of severe hardship amid the impact of increased attacks on hospitals, electricity transmission systems and gas and water supplies.

The deaths, injuries and level of destruction of vital civilian infrastructure are staggering. Many people have been left without access to heat, electricity and water, particularly in the east and the south. Amid freezing

temperatures, that damage is particularly threatening the survival of the most vulnerable, among them elderly persons and those with disabilities, who are already suffering because of the disruption of essential services caused by the war.

The situation is deeply concerning. I must reiterate that international humanitarian law is very clear: attacks must never be directed against civilians or civilian objects, and constant care must be taken to spare them at all times.

The work of humanitarians is aimed at saving lives and safeguarding dignity in the midst of war and disaster. That remains our steadfast objective in Ukraine. Thus far in 2023, almost 560 humanitarian partners — the majority of them local organizations — have provided life-critical aid and protection services to more than 10 million people. The commitment and endurance shown by those organizations in delivering that response is truly admirable, particularly now, as they work against the clock and the elements to support civilians with the services and supplies they need to see them through the harsh winter. In recent weeks, humanitarians have provided more than 361,000 people with some form of direct winter assistance, including winter heating, repair and maintenance of energy and heating systems and much-needed materials for home repair.

Similar efforts continue in response to wider needs across all affected areas of Ukraine. Last week, a landmark 100th inter-agency convoy for 2023 reached Chasiv Yar. Throughout the year, those convoys have provided critical assistance to almost 400,000 people in hard-hit front-line communities across oblasts from Kharkiv, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhya to Dnipro, Kherson and Sumy. That support was substantially buttressed by deliveries from small individual organizations. They have taken place against the backdrop of significant obstacles, of which the lack of humanitarian access across the front line in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya remained the biggest challenge.

At this juncture, I must underscore that, under international humanitarian law, humanitarian access must be allowed and facilitated for all civilians in need, no matter where they live. Obstructions that leave civilians without the essentials to survive are contrary to international humanitarian law. Another major concern for front-line communities is the presence of landmines and other unexploded ordnance, which are

causing tragic avoidable casualties and significantly hindering community recovery. Humanitarian mine action is critical to prevent further civilian casualties, especially among children.

None of that vital humanitarian work would be possible without the incredible donor support to the Ukraine humanitarian response plan, which has received \$2.3 billion of the \$3.9 billion required in 2023. But the \$1.6 billion shortfall is still substantial. It means that civilians have been left without life-saving shelter. Women, girls and boys face the risks of violence and exploitation, while interruptions to safe, life-saving primary health care are putting people's lives in danger. Civilians will not be able to protect or restore their food production and livelihoods, further affecting their food insecurity. Continued financial support is critical to sustain humanitarian operations to the end of 2023 and into 2024, and for as long as civilians endure the war's terrible toll.

Despite the continued attacks on ports and grain infrastructure highlighted by Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports through the new corridors announced in August have steadily increased. The United Nations estimates that some 7 million metric tons of commodities have been transported through those corridors, of which approximately 70 per cent are understood to be grains and other foodstuffs. Taking into account other routes, the overall volume of foodstuffs exported from Ukraine last month was comparable to that of November of last year.

However, significant risks due to air strikes and sea mines remain, and Ukraine's deep-sea ports continue to operate significantly below their potential capacity. In an incident on 16 November, explosions rocked an outbound bulk carrier loaded with wheat. Thankfully, the vessel was not badly damaged and was able to continue its journey.

High levels of agricultural exports from the Russian Federation continue, primarily via the Black Sea, with the Russian Agriculture Ministry reporting expectations of very large grain harvests in 2023. Last month, the Russian Federation also reported the transportation of a first tranche of a total of 200,000 metric tons of grain donations pledged to six African countries.

The Food Price Index of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has continued to trend downwards, with drops in international

cereal prices among the drivers of that. But volatility persists, and we continue to emphasize the imperative of ensuring that all sources of food exports are safely and sustainably connected to global supply chains. The Secretary-General continues his active engagement in support of that.

While Ukraine remains under attack and in a state of conflict, the conditions that are causing such devastation and misery and the ripple effects around the world will persist. As we come to the end of 2023 and into 2024, we must redouble our efforts to prevent further escalation in Ukraine. Together, the Council must do everything within its power to end that tragic war.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. De Rivièrè** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jenča and Mr. Rajasingham for their briefings.

Russia is continuing the war of aggression it launched against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The population is facing a second winter of war — a second winter in which Russia continues to bomb the country's critical infrastructure in defiance of international humanitarian law. On 25 November, the day of the commemoration of the Holodomor, 75 Iranian Shahed drones struck Kyiv in an attack of a scale unprecedented since the start of the conflict. Those attacks are repeated almost every night. The air strike campaign has the same objective as last year, which is to plunge civilians in fear. According to the United Nations Development Programme, Russia's attacks last winter left more than 12 million people without electricity or with limited power for weeks in freezing temperatures, while also disrupting water supplies and heating systems. The humanitarian toll of the conflict continues to rise. More than 10,000 civilians have been killed so far. The war has led to the largest population displacement in Europe since the Second World War, with 7.5 million refugees and 6.5 million displaced. Russia has continued to attack health structures, more than 1,300 of which have been destroyed, according to the World Health Organization.

Russia continues to deny humanitarian actors access to the 4 million civilians in the oblasts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya. We

urge it to allow aid access to those regions. France condemns Russia's attacks on humanitarian personnel and commends the remarkable work of the United Nations and humanitarian actors in a difficult situation.

Russia continues to hold global food security hostage. On 17 July it unilaterally suspended its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and it has systematically bombed Ukraine's grain and port infrastructure since then. France condemns those strikes and supports United Nations efforts to re-establish a secure export corridor in the Black Sea to vulnerable countries. With our European partners, France continues to work to enable exports of Ukrainian grain, particularly within the framework of solidarity corridors. We have also mobilized efforts within the framework of the Grain from Ukraine initiative. In that regard, France has supported the delivery via the World Food Programme and its partners of 25,000 tons of grain to Nigeria and 32,000 tons to the Sudan, in an amount totalling €8.3 million. On 25 November in Kyiv, we announced a new contribution of €3 million for supplying Ukrainian grain to countries that have been particularly affected by the crisis, in addition to the grain deliveries that we have supported for Nigeria, the Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

France will continue to stand alongside Ukraine and the Ukrainian population by providing them with all the support they need for their exercise of their right to self-defence, with a view to restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director of Coordination Rajasingham for their briefings today.

Since February of 2022, Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has resulted in the deaths of nearly 10,000 civilians, injured more than 18,000 people and displaced more than 6 million. The numbers are staggering and continue to grow. Russia's aggression has not only been a direct challenge to the Charter of the United Nations, but it has resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis with consequences far beyond Europe. We have heard an ever-growing list of nonsensical justifications from Russia for waging and continuing this unjustified war — de-Nazification; NATO; biological pathogens spread through bats and birds; a crusade against satanists; a humanitarian mission to protect speakers of Russian; and Russophobia. The list goes on. Russia hopes that people will believe

its lies if they are repeated enough, but regardless of its attempts to mask its imperialist ambitions, the way to end this war has always been unremarkable, simple and straightforward. Russia must cease its aggression and withdraw from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory.

The international community cannot turn a blind eye to Russia's tactics and conduct in this war. Not only has Russia committed unspeakable war crimes; last winter it sought to destroy Ukraine's energy infrastructure and deprive people of heat and electricity at the coldest time of the year. As we head into another cold winter, we expect Russia will try again. There have already been air strikes that appear to be targeting defensive systems put in place to protect energy infrastructure. On the day that Ukraine commemorated the Holodomor famine, which killed several million people, Russia launched a major drone attack on Kyiv and elsewhere. We believe that was a sign of what is to come.

Russia has also been undermining maritime security by threatening free and secure international shipping. By harassing and threatening vessels, interfering with navigation and attacking maritime infrastructure, Russia has acted in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the International Maritime Organization as set forth in article 1 of its Convention. The safety and security of navigation is critical to maintaining the integrity of global supply chains. Despite that, Russia continues to launch near-daily drone and missile attacks on Ukraine's maritime infrastructure, ports and grain storage facilities. It has threatened and struck commercial vessels in the Black Sea and seized search-and-rescue ships, as well as their crews.

Since Moscow unilaterally withdrew from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, it has destroyed more than 300,000 metric tons of grain — enough to feed nearly 15 million people for a month. It is only through the efforts of Ukraine and its partners that the Black Sea humanitarian corridor has been opened and food exports have once again been made possible, allowing more than 6.3 million metric tons of grain and other cargo to reach international markets since August. Those massive shipments underscore the global demand for Ukraine's grain. Today crews on the Black Sea and Sea of Azov are taking great risks in order to facilitate the movement of food supplies and goods from Ukraine to the rest of the world. Global food markets are more volatile, less stable and less resilient,

imperilling access to food elsewhere in the world. While Russia is grabbing a larger share of global grain markets at Ukraine's expense, it is increasing its ability to leverage agricultural exports for political gain over nations that now depend on Russia for food. Thanks to its flagrant disregard for safety and freedom of the seas, it is no surprise that Russia failed to be re-elected to the International Maritime Organization's Council for the first time since 1960.

Every Security Council meeting is a reminder that we must continue to work to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine that is in line with the United Nations Charter. We greatly appreciate the efforts of Ukraine and so many countries around the world to alleviate the negative humanitarian and economic effects of the worldwide food crisis that has been exacerbated by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

**Ms. Dautlari** (Albania): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their briefings.

Russia's unjustified and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine has not stopped. The suffering of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Ukraine continues and the humanitarian needs of the population only get worse. The military aggression's impact is on a scale beyond anything that Europe has seen during this century, resulting in continuing human suffering and the deaths of innocent civilians, the deliberate destruction of vital infrastructure and massive displacement of people within Ukraine and beyond. Millions of people do not have access to basic services, including water, electricity and heating, while food supplies are running low. The winter will make a challenging situation worse. Providing safe access for humanitarian organizations is essential to ensuring the delivery of relief items and enabling people's safe evacuation from areas under attack. As the year comes to an end, and with no prospects of an end to the war, we fear that millions of people will remain internally displaced in Ukraine in 2024, with close to 6 million refugees outside the country. Also, attacks on medical facilities, schools and other infrastructure have been recorded and constitute blatant violations of international humanitarian law.

The situation of civilians, and of children in particular, remains challenging. According to a recent report of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, a total of 512 children have been killed and

more than 1,152 injured in Ukraine since the Russian invasion started. Credible reports indicate that the Russian forces have forcibly transferred up to 1.6 million Ukrainian refugees to Russian territory. Human rights groups say that many were forced to renounce their Ukrainian nationality. Although Russia tries to mask its actions as humanitarian evacuations, forcible transfers are a war crime under international law. Several reports have pointed out unquestionable evidence that the Russian authorities have committed a wide range of violations, many of which amount to war crimes. They include wilful killings, attacks on civilians, unlawful confinement, torture, rape and sexual violence, as well as forced transfers and deportations of children.

The World Food Programme estimates that one in three Ukrainian households are food-insecure, and that situation is even worse in some areas of the east and the south. The war continues to have far-reaching humanitarian implications way beyond Ukraine, across Europe and the globe, especially after Russia stopped the Black Sea Grain Initiative. By seriously affecting the supply of grain and other food staples from Ukraine, it affects many countries and regions of the world that are already facing acute levels of food insecurity. We commend the efforts of Ukraine to continue the export of grain from the Ukrainian ports through the Black Sea humanitarian corridor.

Russia must stop the war that it started without any justification. It must stop its aggression, which is deliberately destroying its neighbour. And it must put an end to a dangerous adventure that continues to kill innocent people and threatens the European security architecture. That is the only way to support a just and lasting peace based on the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their briefings.

The ongoing crisis in Ukraine has witnessed the massive destruction of large-scale infrastructure, and the progress on repairing it has been slow. Recently, Ukraine, Russia and other Black Sea countries experienced rare extreme weather conditions such as snowstorms, which have caused disruptions in transportation and the power supply and led to civilian casualties. China is deeply concerned about that. The

international community and humanitarian agencies should step up their humanitarian relief efforts to ensure that the people affected in conflict areas can safely survive the winter.

According to the forecasts of an authoritative institution, next year, global economic growth will continue to slow and will reach its lowest level since 2020. One of the major reasons for that is the severe impacts of geopolitical conflicts. I would like to underscore once again that the prolongation and complication of the Ukrainian crisis is not in the interest of any party, and that the international community should work together to minimize the negative spillover effects of the crisis, to maintain global food, energy and financial security and to ensure the stability and smooth functioning of the global industrial and supply chains.

China's position on the Ukraine issue remains unchanged. We have always stood on the side of peace and dialogue and have always been committed to promoting peace talks with a view to achieving a ceasefire and an end to the war as soon as possible. Conflicts and wars have no winners. We call on all parties to adopt a calm and pragmatic attitude and to intensify their efforts for peace so as to stop the fighting as soon as possible. China will continue to work with all parties and work tirelessly to promote a political settlement of the crisis.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and Director Ramesh Rajasingham for their informative briefings.

Millions of people in Ukraine are in need of humanitarian aid. With temperatures dropping and the fighting ongoing, those needs are growing, notwithstanding the winter response plan, which runs until March 2024. Of the \$3.9 billion required for the plan, only \$2.2 billion has been received, which means there is a shortfall of 44 per cent in the funding still needed to cover all the current needs. It goes without saying that the needs assessments and projections are only indicators, as the situation is affected by multiple factors, such as developments in the fighting on the ground, inclement weather and human factors. The increase in humanitarian need is indeed directly related to the fact that civilian populations and infrastructure, including essential infrastructure, continue to be targeted in bombings, which are forcing many civilians to flee their homes.

It is important to remember that war is not a lawless situation, and that the warring parties are obliged to comply with their commitments under international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Protocols Additional. The warring parties have a responsibility to protect — without discrimination — people who do not take part in the fighting, essential infrastructure, humanitarian personnel and those injured in the war. They must also facilitate unhindered access for humanitarian relief to those in need, in particular women and children, who continue to pay the highest price in this war.

We are alarmed by the attacks on health infrastructure, education facilities and agricultural facilities. Such attacks are unacceptable, especially in a global context of ever-increasing humanitarian needs, in which disruptions to food supply chains are likely to worsen the food security of already-vulnerable countries or regions.

My country stresses the urgent need for strengthened vigilance in the protection of energy facilities in order to prevent any grave incidents from occurring. The incident that occurred a few days ago, in which the power supply to the Zaporizhzhya power plant was disrupted, narrowly avoided becoming a potentially fatal catastrophe.

Moreover, the consequences of the destruction of the Kakhovka dam must be addressed swiftly, with a view to repairing the extensive damage done to the people of the region, helping them to protect themselves from environmental risks and, in the long term, enabling them to return to their activities, in particular farming, fishing and forestry, without fearing for their health.

We also call on the warring parties to refrain from the use of weapons of mass destruction with indiscriminate effects, such as mines, cluster munitions and other remote-guidance weapons.

My country calls on all the parties to commit to the search for a diplomatic solution. We encourage the countries of the region and regional and subregional organizations to promote dialogue between the parties, to rebuild trust and to re-establish communication. Each day that passes is one too many, and every death that occurs is one too many.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my country's call on the countries with influence over the warring parties to urge them to give priority to the channels of

diplomacy and good-faith negotiations, in order to give peace and peaceful coexistence a chance.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their briefings and their tireless work in Ukraine and beyond.

Russia's military aggression against its neighbour country continues unabated. Ten days ago, and just after a new wave of drone attacks hit the capital, Kyiv, the President of the Swiss Confederation highlighted, in Kyiv, our commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. I echo his words. Switzerland will continue to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people, now and for the long term. Allow me to underline three points that are at the heart of our commitment.

First, it is essential to continue to support humanitarian actions and early-recovery projects. Nearly 18 million people — almost half of Ukraine's current population — depend on them. The onset of winter, compounded by renewed Russian attacks on essential infrastructure, is having a major impact on the civilian population. Millions of people are suffering from power, heating and water cuts. The 100th inter-agency humanitarian convoy of the year, sent out last week, bears witness to the tireless efforts of humanitarian organizations. The lack of humanitarian access to the Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine, despite the immense needs of the civilians there, is deeply worrisome. Switzerland is contributing to the United Nations winter response plan for Ukraine, providing specific winter aid to ensure vital protection, dignified living conditions and secure electricity and heating services.

Secondly, the civilian population must be protected. At least 10,000 civilians have been killed and more than 18,500 injured since February 2022. Ongoing Russian air strikes continue to add to that toll. We receive almost daily reports of attacks destroying or damaging homes, schools and other civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. Notably, attacks in the past few weeks have hit hospitals in Selydove, in the Donetsk region, and in the city of Kherson. Under international humanitarian law, health facilities and personnel enjoy special protection. That law applies to all parties in all armed conflicts and must be strictly respected in all circumstances.

Thirdly, food security in Ukraine and worldwide must be strengthened. Switzerland welcomed President Zelensky's Grain from Ukraine initiative and the

establishment of a humanitarian corridor in the Black Sea. We also welcome the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to facilitate unhindered exports and stress the importance of the European Union–Ukraine solidarity lanes. Open and uninterrupted trade is the foundation for the delivery of humanitarian food aid worldwide. We reiterate our disappointment at Russia's suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and condemn its attacks destroying Ukrainian grain and port infrastructure. Switzerland remains committed to combating food insecurity, in particular by supporting the work of the World Food Programme and prioritizing humanitarian demining in Ukraine, including the clearance of agricultural land.

Humanitarian efforts, the protection of civilians and global food security must be at the top of the international agenda. Switzerland remains strongly committed to those objectives, both in this context and in others. However, in order to arrive at lasting solutions in Ukraine, we first and foremost call on Russia to cease its military aggression immediately.

**Mr. França Danese** (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their briefings and welcome the representative of Ukraine to this meeting.

Brazil remains deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, in particular the continued loss of civilian lives, the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. We express our deepest solidarity with all those affected and strongly condemn attacks on civilian infrastructure, including energy and transport networks and port facilities. It is imperative that all parties de-escalate the hostilities, prioritize civilian protection and comply with international humanitarian law. The conflict is having a direct impact on international food security, disrupting major grain supplies, and is already affecting millions, particularly in developing countries. We strongly urge all parties to ensure safe passage for grain exports, and we reiterate our support for a resumption of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is a critical step in mitigating food security risks.

Regrettably, the Security Council is again meeting without any progress in dialogue or signs of de-escalation. The protracted hostilities have inflicted considerable suffering on the civilian population and there is a growing risk of wider repercussions. The



quest for peace is a collective responsibility that extends to all actors in the international community. Brazil welcomes further efforts to that end and is prepared to actively contribute to peace initiatives as soon as the parties are ready to resume a dialogue, either directly or through third parties. We therefore urge all the parties to engage without delay in pragmatic negotiations, with the support of third parties and through the various means provided for in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Despite the challenges, Brazil believes that there is always room for peace. We must strive to end the suffering and destruction caused by the conflict. Through concerted efforts, the international community can and should play a decisive role in guiding the parties towards a peaceful solution. We reiterate our firm commitment to a just and lasting peace based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate security concerns of all parties.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their briefings today and for the work of their teams.

It is now nearly two years since Russia invaded Ukraine, illegally and brutally. Russia has killed Ukrainian men, women and children and denied them their future. Russia has injured men, women and children and destroyed the hospitals where they might seek care. Russia has destroyed civilian infrastructure — hospitals, schools, homes, playgrounds, theatres, roads and railways. And as winter approaches, Russia is now targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure. However, Russia has not broken the spirit and the resolve of the Ukrainian people or our determination to support them.

First, we commend the work of the Ukrainian organizations and volunteer networks that are providing life-saving humanitarian support. My Foreign Secretary met with some of those organizations during his recent visit to Ukraine and was struck by their courage and bravery. We will continue to support their work, and we urge the United Nations and other colleagues to do the same.

Secondly, as we have heard, more than 17 million Ukrainians need humanitarian assistance, but Russia continues to deny and block humanitarian access to millions of Ukrainians living in the territories that are temporarily under Russia's control, leaving those

people severely short of food, water and fuel as winter sets in. We therefore call on Russia to comply fully with its obligations under international humanitarian law, allowing humanitarians to operate safely in those areas and to deliver aid to millions of people in need.

Thirdly, like others, we welcomed the establishment of a maritime corridor in the Black Sea that has now enabled Ukraine to supply 5 million tons of grain to global markets. Russia's attempts to prevent Ukraine from exporting its grain by attacking its ports, holding the world's food supply to ransom, have failed. We will continue to work with Ukraine and other partners to ensure the security of the corridor and protect global food security.

Russia has caused humanitarian suffering through its invasion of Ukraine, so we once again urge Russia to end its war now by withdrawing from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory.

**Ms. Hackman** (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their informative briefings.

As the situation in the Middle East commands global attention, the prevailing conditions in Ukraine, as we have heard, require the undiminished support of the international community to help to round the bend from the ravages of war to a constructive engagement for the peace of Ukraine. The Russian Federation's war on Ukraine has resulted in more than 28,000 civilian casualties, the displacement of some 10 million people from their homes, gross violations of human rights and extensive destruction to civilian infrastructure, including Ukraine's energy infrastructure. We are also aware of the effects it has had on global food, energy and fuel systems and the implications for economies around the world.

It is, for us, most unfortunate that children are having to endure physical and psychological trauma from the war. The impact of the war on their lived experiences has long-term ramifications and will require considerable resources and efforts for their recovery. The children of Ukraine, we believe, like their counterparts everywhere, deserve better. They deserve to be protected from harm and to have their rights upheld.

We remain concerned about the persistent contestations across many front lines, particularly now, when winter conditions have minimized the coping

capacity of affected populations, especially women, young children, the aged and the sick. We are therefore guided by the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law in calling on the warring parties to refrain from further targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. All sides must endeavour to comply with the principles of distinction, proportionality and military necessity to avoid causing harm to innocent people.

We welcome the commitment of humanitarian workers to help save lives, at great risk and peril to their own lives, and take this opportunity to urge, once again, unhindered access for humanitarian aid to all areas in which people stand in need of vital necessities, including food, water, medicines, tents, warm clothing and heating, as temperatures continue to fall to sub-zero levels.

My delegation holds strongly that violence is not the answer and the time to end the war is past due. Ghana believes that peace in Ukraine is attainable and, therefore, we reiterate the necessity of diplomacy and dialogue towards the immediate cessation of hostilities and finding a lasting and comprehensive settlement that accords with the principles of international law and the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we again call on the Russian Federation to end the war, with the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine.

**Mr. Fernandes** (Mozambique): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and Director Ramesh Rajasingham for their insights on this important issue.

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine over the past 22 months is estimated to have caused thousands of civilian casualties and hundreds of thousands of military casualties. It is regrettable to see that the situation on the ground is deteriorating, despite all our requests for the cessation of hostilities, both inside and outside of the Security Council.

The repercussions are starting to become catastrophic. This conflict comes at an enormous cost, especially in terms of civilian security. In fact, the primary outcome of this conflict is the enormous human suffering, characterized by a humanitarian crisis with internal displacement on an enormous scale, food insecurity, abuse of human rights, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, death and injuries, and an arms race, among others.

The Ukraine conflict is a serious threat to international peace and security. Sadly, the possibility for peace is becoming increasingly illusory the longer the conflict persists. The situation on the ground tends to worsen, with multidimensional impacts at the local, regional and international levels. In the light of this, we continuously reiterate that a military solution to this conflict is not viable.

The situation Ukraine is worsening, with increased displacement of the population, the destruction of basic infrastructure, the disruption of agricultural activities and food production being the regrettable outcomes. Violence against civilians and restrictions on freedom of movement, as well as increased demand for humanitarian assistance and economic decline, are all putting a huge strain on our common capacities to assist.

The humanitarian situation is dire and is expected to deteriorate further, as the commencement of winter presents additional challenges. Despite the alarming situation, we believe that the resumption of the Black Sea Grain Initiative should be reconsidered, as it could serve as a credible and meaningful start towards dialogue for the greater good. We are convinced that both contending parties should be encouraged to resolve this dispute through political negotiations. Confidence-building measures are crucial and urgent.

The shift of the narrative and practice from a confrontational perspective to a cooperative one is not easy, but is necessary. The United Nations should play a critical role in that regard. In this vein, while reiterating its principled position on this conflict, Mozambique appeals to the parties involved to do the following: first, implement an immediate cessation of hostilities; secondly, resume direct negotiations, without preconditions and in good faith; and, lastly, adopt a constructive, inclusive and results-oriented approach, focusing on mutual benefits.

To conclude, we humbly believe that the foregoing is the most effective and viable way towards finding a common, agreeable and sustainable solution to resolve this conflict.

**Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan): I would like to start by thanking France for requesting this meeting, which gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Ukraine. I would also like to thank Mr. Jenča and Mr. Rajasingham for their alarming briefings.

The second winter since Russia launched its unprovoked war of aggression is setting in. In Ukraine, it has started to snow heavily, and the temperature is plummeting. Recently, people reportedly died owing to a snowstorm. Russia's continued attacks against energy facilities could force civilians to make difficult choices, such as between warmth and other essential services, in the coming months.

Japan is deeply concerned that the already dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine may go from bad to worse this winter. We cannot tolerate the weaponizing of winter yet again. In September, ahead of a full-fledged cold winter, Japan has provided 2 autotransformers to Ukraine and plans to provide 10 more, to contribute to the recovery and reinforcement of the power supply in the country. Japan is also aiming to provide three gas turbines by the end of this year, with two more currently in the procurement process. Once delivered, these autotransformers and gas turbines are expected to benefit more than 5.5 million people in Ukraine. Japan is also deeply distressed by Russia's blatant disregard for international humanitarian law. The law's provisions are not options but obligations that parties to conflicts have to observe and rules by which they are held accountable. Japan will not tolerate the possibility of impunity for those responsible, and the perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law must be identified and held accountable.

The death toll of civilians in Ukraine verified by the United Nations has exceeded 10,000, including more than 560 children. The actual figures may be significantly higher. Why are we having to observe such a grim milestone? Why did those innocent people have to die? Why do those who survive have to endure more destruction? The answer to these questions is obvious. Without Russia's unlawful war of aggression, we would not be facing such distressing questions. We once again strongly urge Russia to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and to refrain from causing further atrocities. The people of Ukraine are enduring another deadly winter of war. Japan will continue to stand in solidarity with them until they can finally enjoy the warm spring of peace that they deserve.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Before I begin my statement, I would like to reiterate our fundamental disagreement with the excessive number of delegations invited to today's meeting under rules 37 and 39. We believe the best and

most logical approach would have been to allow two of them, Ukraine and the European Union (EU), as the Chinese presidency wisely did in November, with the understanding that all the rest that wanted to could send their statements to the Council in writing. The other three delegations invited are members of both NATO and the EU, which have agreed on shared approaches to Ukraine. It is quite clear that as has been the case in the past, their statements will add no value. On every such occasion, the Security Council is forced to waste its time listening to the copy-and-paste statements that junior members of NATO and the EU read out for the cameras for the sake of ticking boxes and their own national political interests. That undermines the authority of the Security Council.

We have just heard briefings by Mr. Miroslav Jenča and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, from which it is clear that nothing extraordinary has happened in Ukraine that requires an open Security Council meeting on the country. Previously, it was at least tragedies in residential areas of Ukrainian cities that were cited as reasons for such meetings, despite being groundlessly attributed to the Russian armed forces and later turning out to actually be the result of Ukrainian missile defence systems deployed near civilian objects in violation of the norms of international humanitarian law. Alternatively, there were attempts to pass off as such tragedies our attacks on warehouses of the Armed Forces of Ukraine disguised as supermarkets, grain silos, port facilities or areas where soldiers of the Kyiv regime or foreign mercenaries were stationed in hotels, hostels and recreation centres. Needless to say, the truth always emerged later, either through footage of detonating munitions posted by Ukrainians on social networks or the numerous obituaries of liquidated militants and nationalists appearing on the same networks.

Today, however, our Western colleagues have not found even justifications as tenuous as those. But it is important for them to keep the Ukrainian issue alive in the Security Council by any means necessary, and to do that they have to get us to meet in this Chamber from time to time — even if it looks cynical when we consider that the same countries still refuse to see the real humanitarian catastrophe unfolding before their eyes and caused by Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, where, for the past two months, according to the Secretary-General, more children have died than in any conflict since he first took office. He even called Gaza a children's graveyard. However, according to

Western countries' warped logic, that is not a reason to discuss the issue in the Security Council, as it is disadvantageous to them in geopolitical terms and shows their strategic ally in an unfavourable light. They therefore prefer to have us meet in the Security Council to discuss Ukraine, in order to promote anti-Russian invective, or Syria, in order to bandy about anti-Syrian narratives, which is what happens during the utterly pointless but regularly held Council meetings on the Syrian chemical dossier.

The United States and its allies could not care less about Ukrainians, as was already evident in April of last year, when the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the head of the United States' Pentagon, Lloyd Austin, arrogantly convinced the head of the Kyiv regime not to sign a draft peace treaty with Russia that had already been initialled. Now Kyiv is frankly kicking itself as it realizes that Ukraine can no longer obtain such favourable conditions for peace. And many people are already openly admitting the obvious, which is that in order to avoid the coming collapse, all that the Kyiv regime had to do was to comply with the Minsk agreements and behave towards its own citizens like any normal State with claims to democracy — in other words, stop shelling and killing them and grant them the same rights to a national, cultural and historical identity as other citizens of Ukraine.

However, as we know today from many sources, that scenario did not appeal to the Zelenskyy regime's Western backers, the organizers of the anti-constitutional coup in Maidan almost 10 years ago. As former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former French President François Hollande admitted, they did not use the cover of the Minsk agreements to arm Ukraine for seven years and prepare it for war with Russia simply to enable our two brother peoples to live in peace and harmony again. Of course, the old colonial ways of doing things made themselves felt, and our African and Asian colleagues well remember how Europe's former metropolises pitted neighbouring countries against each other and used artificial borders to split up entire peoples, fomenting and provoking wars and conflicts for decades. Nothing about their conduct during those times has essentially changed either in Africa or in Ukraine, which for years they have been preparing to play the role of pawn in their geopolitical struggle against Russia. If we keep that obvious geopolitical context in view, we can see there is no question why, according to the recently reported testimony of Zelenskyy's party comrade-in-

arms David Arakhamia, Boris Johnson dissuaded the head of the Kyiv junta from making peace with Russia with the following remarkable words. "Let us just go to war." And the chief EU diplomat, Mr. Borrell Fontelles, who proclaimed Europe a blooming garden and who came up with the idea of allocating money for the war from the so-called European Peace Fund, also said in April of last year that "[t]his war must be won on the battlefield."

And so Ukraine began to fight and promote delusional Western slogans about the need to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. Now it has already reached a point where it is running out of soldiers, whom the Zelenskyy regime has been ruthlessly throwing into the so-called meat grinder. For a long time now Ukrainians have been calling mobilization "death mobilization" — graveyard conscription. No one there wants to meet a certain and senseless death, to the extent that the average age of people mobilized is now approaching 50. And just the other day, as reported in Ukrainian media, the first batch of mobilized 17-year-old orphans at the Haimadatska Sich reserve training centre finished training. Apparently they were supposed to be used exclusively in the rear-guard areas of Kharkiv oblast, in the 103rd territorial defence brigade. However, as usual, the Ukrainian authorities lied to everyone, and one of the orphans died on the front line on 3 December, as the director of the orphanage posted on social networks. In a word, Zelenskyy and his associates are already forming a kind of Hitler Youth, just like the head of the Third Reich did before his inevitable and inglorious end in May 1945. It is noteworthy that the death throes of the Kyiv regime and its Führer is already becoming so obvious that his associates have started to squabble and fight for power, like crabs in a barrel, and are distancing themselves from their leader. For example, for the past couple of weeks, almost everyone who is close to Zelenskyy has been warning the media that in Ukraine a brutal dictatorship is forming, there is rampant corruption, fatal military miscalculations are being made, and in general, things are going in the wrong direction. We ourselves have been talking about that at Security Council meetings for a long time, but such statements are now being constantly made by actors in Ukraine, such as the already mentioned Mr. Arakhamia, a former advisor of Zelenskyy Mr. Arestovych and the mayor of Kyiv, Mr. Klitschko. There has also been more and more criticism of the blatant lawlessness promoted by Zelenskyy and his clique in an attempt to destroy the canonical Orthodox Christianity in Ukraine.

One even starts to wonder when our Western colleagues will finally recognize that it is obvious as well. They continue, with a tenacity worthy of a better cause, to pour their taxpayers' money into the criminal Kyiv regime which is rotten to the core with corruption. Some are slowly beginning to see the light, but it has not yet become a trend. That is why we have proposed discussing the impact of the ongoing supplies of Western weapons to Ukraine on the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis at a separate meeting of the Security Council meeting on 11 December. Given that these days mark the tenth anniversary of the protests of the Kyiv Maidan, after which Ukraine, thanks to the efforts of the United States and its allies, embarked on a fatal path that was not in line with its national interests, we are also holding, on 8 December, an informal Arria Formula meeting with the involvement of some of the participants in those tragic events.

In conclusion, since a number of Western delegations today — as well as at a previous similar meeting — touched on the topic of the so-called grain deal and went as far as to accuse Russia of all but provoking a famine in Ukraine, I would like to make the following point: if the Ukrainians were really in such dire straits as Western countries try to portray them to be, Kyiv would probably not be exporting grain from the country in such huge quantities. According to expert estimates, in 2022 and 2023, almost 50 million tons of grain were exported from the supposedly starving Ukraine. Between January and August, food was sold for \$14.6 billion, of which the main items were grain crops, including wheat and corn. I have a question: how does that trend line up with the assessments by our Western colleagues of a so-called new Holodomor in that country? It seems that if that were true, then Western countries would be the ones contributing to that Holodomor by pushing Kyiv to supply grain to rich and well-fed European Union countries. In this case, truckers from Eastern European countries that are blocking trucks carrying Ukrainian grain at the border and have apparently been fighting this Holodomor preventing food from going out of the supposedly starving country.

As for the prospects for resuming the Black Sea Grain Initiative, we have expressed our position on many occasions. Owing to that project, we were deceived both by the Kyiv regime, which was using the Initiative to attack Russian targets from directly within humanitarian corridors, and by Western countries, which failed to comply with any part of the memorandum concluded between Russia and the United Nations and recognized

as an integral part of the deal. Until it is complied with and we receive guarantees that the West and the Zelenskyy regime will properly fulfil the provisions of the Initiative, its resumption is out of the question.

**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their insightful briefings.

We strongly condemn the recent attacks on Kyiv, the largest since the beginning of the war, as well as the brutal shelling of the city of Kherson on Sunday by Russia. Those are just two of the most recent attacks, which are happening daily.

Attacks against civilian infrastructure are primarily designed to inflict even more suffering on the Ukrainian people and are a serious violation of international law. Attacks must stop immediately. We once again express our full support for the ongoing processes to ensure accountability for violations. All perpetrators and accomplices must be held to account.

Malta remains deeply concerned that children continue to bear the brunt of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals remain at an all-time high. We call on Russia to cease attacks on schools and hospitals and populated areas, to allow access to the United Nations and humanitarian actors in all the territories and to adopt and implement an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to aggravate global food security. Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, as well as its campaign of systematic attacks against Ukrainian port infrastructure and grain stores, are undermining Ukrainian livelihoods, destabilizing the international economy and instrumentalizing food.

The humanitarian needs in Ukraine are driven by the consequences of Russia's invasion. Today one in five Ukrainian families are facing hunger, with agricultural and food producing communities the most affected. Ukraine's agricultural fields are potentially contaminated with remnants of war making them unable to be harvested. As we have just heard from our briefers, winter will only continue to worsen the dire humanitarian conditions across the country.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, there have been 31 documented attacks targeting facilities crucial to grain production and export in Ukraine. Such actions

have caused significant harm to more than 160 civilian infrastructure facilities and destroyed more than 300,000 tons of grain.

As a result, the export of Ukrainian grain cargoes to countries of Asia, Africa and Europe has been reduced by almost 3 million tons per month. That is exacerbating the worldwide food crisis and inflicting additional suffering on communities that are already grappling with insufficient access to food. As part of the European Union's response, the solidarity lanes will continue to facilitate transit and export via land routes to world markets, which have enabled the export of more than 57 million tons of Ukrainian agricultural products so far.

The security, stability and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea are crucial for sustainable grain exports. There have been threats to attack cargo vessels in the ports of the Black Sea, and incidents involving civilian vessels resulting in casualties occurred last month. Those actions significantly jeopardize the safety of maritime transportation and hinder commercial activities. We once again urge Russia to fully comply with its international obligations and ensure the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea.

In conclusion, we underscore once again our conviction that Russia must immediately cease all hostilities in view of securing a just and lasting peace. Most importantly, it must unconditionally and completely withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

**Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the briefers for their detailed statements.

The war in Ukraine will soon be approaching its second anniversary, and there is no sign of a peaceful solution that would put an end to the suffering of the Ukrainian people and to the severe humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict.

The gravity of the situation is underscored by the internal displacement of more than 3.5 million people and the nearly 6 million people seeking refuge abroad. They have endured significant suffering in their pursuit of security and safety. That is in addition to the killing of thousands of people, the division of families and the separation of children from their parents. More than 17 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. We also regret that ongoing fighting has led to the evacuation of civilians, including children, from Donetsk and other areas.

The long-term repercussions of this conflict, especially on children, are also concerning — 3,800 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed, 5 million children have had their education disrupted and only 30 per cent of Ukraine's children are attending school full time. That means an entire generation is at risk of losing their right to education, which hinders their acquisition of the skills and capabilities that would empower them to be active in building and developing their future communities.

The severe damage to basic infrastructure in Ukraine raises further concerns about the living conditions of civilians and their access to basic services, especially during the current winter season.

We also stress the special protection, under international humanitarian law, afforded to medical and humanitarian personnel engaged exclusively in medical duties. That protection extends to their means of transportation, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities.

In that context, we regret that relief aid from a non-governmental organization was damaged during the attack in Kherson on 4 December. We are also concerned about the continued attacks on health facilities in Ukraine, especially near the front lines. More than half of the attacks that targeted health-care facilities globally between February and October occurred in Ukraine, according to the World Health Organization. Although the figures will change when adding the attacks launched on health facilities in the Gaza Strip, that does not change the concerning reality of the situation in Ukraine. We therefore demand that all conflicting parties around the world comply with international humanitarian law, regardless of who is violating the law, against whom and where the violation is taking place.

Armed conflicts around the world have reached their peak. The suffering of civilians has exceeded what can be tolerated or contained. It has become increasingly urgent to intensify our international efforts to find a path to peace in Ukraine and in other conflict-affected countries. Diplomacy, dialogue and political solutions must remain the primary and only option to resolve differences and permanently end the suffering of people.

Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates urges all parties to work together to end the war and achieve peace, and we stand ready to support all serious efforts to that end. We look forward to the day when lasting

security and stability are restored in Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, and Ukraine's unity, independence and territorial integrity are preserved.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ecuador.

I am grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and to Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director for Coordination of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their informative briefings.

I recognize the presence of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine, as well as the presence of the representatives of the delegations of the European Union, Denmark, Poland and Latvia.

We once again underscore the extraordinary work undertaken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs over the course of 2023. In addition to the worsening humanitarian situation in Ukraine, we have seen humanitarian emergencies grow ever more acute in other crises throughout the world, including in my region, as well as in Haiti and in the Middle East, specifically Gaza.

Today's meeting has provided us an opportunity to receive updated information regarding the severe impact that the military aggression against Ukraine continues to have as the conflict threatens to enter its third year in just under three months. We insist on the need for parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. We also call on the parties to protect humanitarian workers. We call on the Russian Federation, in particular, to facilitate safe humanitarian access to areas under its temporary occupation — especially as winter draws near and the people suffer from a lack of access to basic services, including water, sanitation and health services.

We regret that, since the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the shelling of Ukraine's port cities and grain transport infrastructure has increased. We recall the need for maritime protection and security and, in particular, the obligation to respect the integrity of civilian vessels. We call for the preservation of food and water supply systems, and we recall that it is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless the objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, including agricultural goods and harvests. As my delegation has expressed, the impact that this war

is having on agriculture and rural livelihoods in Ukraine is critical, with losses of household incomes in the tens of billions, the destruction of machinery, equipment, storage facilities, crops, inputs and arable land.

Moreover, we are particularly concerned about the situation of girls and boys, including those who are fleeing the war and are displaced, those who are refugees and those that endure violence on a daily basis and lack access to health-care services and education. That will only worsen as winter draws near. We are also closely following the situation of transferred minors. We call for their rights to be protected and their return facilitated.

Finally, we fervently appeal to the Council to reiterate its support for the work of the Secretary-General, which will remain vital — both on the humanitarian front and in efforts to move towards a just and lasting peace on the basis of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially regarding the principle of territorial integrity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine) (*spoke in Spanish*): I recognize the presence of the representative of Putin in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

Since the beginning of the large-scale invasion, we have documented more than 114,000 violations of laws and customs of war on Ukrainian territory by his country. The number of victims grows day by day, thus adding new notorious pages to the shameful story of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

In particular, on 2 December, we saw on the Internet the appearance of a video that showed Russian troops killing two Ukrainian soldiers immediately following their surrender. Trapped and without munitions, those Ukrainian soldiers were unarmed and had clearly indicated their intention to surrender. Nevertheless, they were shot by the Russian occupiers, who have never considered themselves bound by the Geneva Conventions. The Ukrainian armed forces authenticated the video, which was filmed by drone near the village of Stepove, in the Donetsk region. The Donetsk Regional Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation into that violation of the laws and customs of war.

That is not the first execution of Ukrainian prisoners of war. We have previously drawn the Security Council's attention to other atrocity crimes, including the killing of Ukrainian soldiers captured and subjected to cruel

and inhumane treatment. We also recall the massacre of Ukrainian prisoners of war in the penal colony of Olenivka in July 2022. Putin's envoy tried to shift responsibility for that crime onto Ukraine, referencing its typical propaganda line about Ukrainians killing Ukrainians.

Despite Russia's impediments to obtaining information on the ground, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was finally able to conclude that the degree of damage was not characteristic of the impact of the high-mobility artillery rocket system missile attack. It took more than a year for the United Nations to finally expose the lie produced by Russia on an industrial scale in this Chamber and beyond.

As we approach the upcoming anniversary of Russia's aggression against and full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there is little room for doubt that its ultimate goal is the elimination of the Ukrainian State and the Ukrainian nation. The daily missile and drone terrorism affecting the entire country is an important element of that deliberate policy of genocide.

With the onset of winter, Russia is stepping up its bombing. On 25 November alone, Russia launched 75 drones of Iranian origin and one KH-59 missile. Since that day, Russia has used 272 drones and 21 KH-59 and S-300 missiles to bomb Ukraine. Our air defence forces did an incredible job, intercepting 81 per cent of those objects in the air. In particular, 225 uncrewed aerial vehicles and five missiles were shot down. However, those missiles and drones that were not shot down brought death and destruction to Ukrainians, their homes and civilian infrastructure. Towns and villages that are close to the front line and within range of Russian artillery are hit hardest by such suffering.

On 30 November, Russia attacked the village of Novohrodivka and two other villages in the Pokrovsk district of the Donetsk region with six S-300 missiles, destroying in particular a multistorey residential building. Two people were immediately confirmed dead, while an entire family — an 8-year-old girl and her parents — was reported missing. Sadly, on Monday, the girl's body was found in the rubble. Search operations for her parents in the rubble are still ongoing. It is yet another bloody tragedy brought to Donbas by Russia, which has robbed yet another family of their lives.

The city of Kherson is exposed to Russian artillery fire on an almost daily basis. On 3 December, a heavy artillery attack hit a residential building and two medical institutions, killing one woman and injuring

four more people. On 5 December, Kherson's civilian infrastructure came under Russian attack once again. Two local residents lost their lives, and six others were injured. Among those injured were four doctors, when Russian missiles struck the medical centre once again. In the 11 months of this year so far, 59,000 shellings of residential areas were recorded in 24 regions of Ukraine. Most of the attacks were carried out in the regions of Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv. As a result, 2,000 people were killed and 11,000 injured.

Children have been among the worst affected. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, at least 512 Ukrainian children have been killed and 1,152 injured. I reiterate that those figures do not include casualties in the temporarily occupied territories, where the number of victims could be significantly higher. Ukrainian children are losing their lives and health. The Russian aggression has robbed them of their childhood. Russian shelling disrupts their access to regular education and leisure activities.

In addition, those children who remain in the occupied territories face the threat of abduction and illegal deportation to Russia. The return and repatriation of Ukrainian children who have been illegally deported or forcibly displaced by the Russian Federation remains one of the most pressing challenges. Ukraine once again insists that all children must be returned immediately and unconditionally, including those who were subsequently adopted or transferred to foster families. We express our deep appreciation to our global partners for their proactive role and unwavering support for Ukraine's efforts in that endeavour.

To further consolidate those international efforts, the inaugural meeting of the international coalition for the return of Ukrainian children is scheduled for 8 December in Kyiv. The main objective is to reinforce Ukraine's mission to bring home deported and forcibly displaced children. In addition, the coalition intends to undertake specific projects and commitments to ensure the safe repatriation, rehabilitation and integration of affected children. We thank all the countries that have already joined the coalition and encourage others to support that vital initiative.

We have consistently stressed that the presence of the Russian delegation in this Chamber remains the main obstacle impeding the Security Council's ability to efficiently carry out its mandated efforts to restore



international peace and security. Indeed, the presence of Putin's Russia has become a common challenge to the effectiveness of international frameworks, giving Russia more power to instigate conflicts in different countries and provoke global crises. That cannot continue.

Therefore, the removal of the aggressor State should be seen as a natural reaction of international organizations, aimed at detoxifying the working environment and ensuring capacities to fulfil mandated activities. That process began almost immediately after the full-scale invasion, when the decision on Russia's membership in the Human Rights Council was adopted (General Assembly resolution ES-11/3) and is already under way. Russia has not been welcomed at the UNESCO Executive Board, the International Court of Justice, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or the International Maritime Organization.

The time has come for a serious debate on the presence of Putin's delegates in this Chamber. While we all recognize the need to reform the Security Council, we must also acknowledge that all efforts will be futile if the aggressor State is allowed to enjoy the rights of a permanent member. The United Nations community is now discussing our approach to the upcoming Summit of the Future. Our common willingness to fulfil the mission of defeating evil will not only determine the success of the Summit, but it will also shape the future itself — the one we leave for the generations to come. Attempting to reconcile with evil, offering concessions and allowing crimes and criminals to go unpunished will only result in the generations to come facing threats and suffering on a vastly greater scale. I am sure that apart from the aggressor State itself, no one here is interested in such an outcome. In Friday's consultations on the zero draft of the Pact for the Future, Costa Rica initiated a joint interregional declaration on human rights on behalf of 71 Member States. It was a powerful message of a vision of the future based on dignity, justice and human rights for all. And how can we turn that vision into reality without addressing the issue of human rights violations by a country that occupies a permanent seat on the Council?

I have the honour to conclude my speech with today's words from the President of Ukraine.

"6 December. The Day of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. A day of the strong. A day of the brave. A day of the unbreakable. Men and women, warriors, heroes. All who continue to defend the State, and all who have given their lives in order not to surrender

Ukraine. It is worth reflecting on that in silence. To remember. To comprehend. To compare this morning with a morning 651 days ago. How loud it was, and how fearful it was for many. But fear was defeated. And now everyone has heard about us. It was so difficult back then, but we are not ashamed now".

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark.

**Ms. Lassen** (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark. We thank the presidency for the opportunity to address the Council, and the briefers for sharing their important updates.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to cause immeasurable suffering and aggravate the already dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs predicts that 40 per cent of the Ukrainian population — close to 15 million people — will need humanitarian assistance in 2024. The Nordic countries call for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, including to Russian-occupied areas.

Russia's indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian actors and facilities, are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law and must be brought to an end. As winter sets in, Russia's attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure are causing great concern. Tragically, it is not only in Ukraine that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are taking place. We reiterate the importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians at all times, in line with international humanitarian law.

Russia's war of aggression continues to create instability in global grain markets. Its bombing of Ukrainian agrarian infrastructure and grain export facilities constitutes a weaponization of food, in violation of international humanitarian law. It is vital to ensure safe transport for food exports from Ukraine, and we are pleased to see that the Black Sea corridor created and managed by Ukraine is working to sustain global food security. The Nordic countries also welcome the extension of the Grain from Ukraine initiative and are supportive of the European Union solidarity lanes. We continue to be committed to supporting humanitarian food assistance globally and engaging with partner countries in building longer-term food security.

The Nordics would like to reiterate their strongest condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We will continue to support international efforts to ensure full accountability for all crimes committed in and against Ukraine. The fact that Russia — a permanent member of the Security Council — is still waging an illegal and brutal war continues to pose serious challenges far beyond Ukraine. It challenges the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Council, the Charter, and livelihoods, food and energy security across the globe. We support Ukraine's peace formula and welcome the growing global support for the ongoing diplomatic efforts to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the principles of the Charter and on respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine and our engagement to alleviate the global consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia must immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

**Ms. Skoczek** (Poland): Let me start by thanking the presidency of Ecuador for keeping the humanitarian situation in Ukraine on the Council's agenda by convening this important meeting today. I also want to thank today's briefers for their statements.

Poland aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union (EU). For almost 10 years now — since April 2014 — Ukraine has had to contend with Russia's aggression, resulting in mounting civilian casualties and enormous material destruction. Poland consistently condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Its repercussions are having a major impact on global as well as regional security. We deplore the attacks and call for accountability for violations of international law committed in Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

Poland has supported Ukraine since the very beginning of the war and will continue to do so, based on our belief that it is the right thing to do. Our support is built on three pillars — hosting and providing support to the biggest community of Ukrainian refugees; operating as a hub for transferring international humanitarian aid, including as a hub for medical evacuations and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism; and delivering

humanitarian aid directly to Ukraine. As we speak, more than 17.6 million people in Ukraine need various forms of humanitarian assistance. In that context, we welcome the Winter Response Plan of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which aims to address specific humanitarian needs exacerbated by the winter cold in Ukraine.

There is no lack of humanitarian crises around the world, many of them caused by natural disasters or climate-change induced. Many of them were inevitable but impossible to prepare for. Enormous resources are needed to mitigate them and bring relief to the populations affected. But that is not the case with Ukraine. Its people are known for hospitality and generosity. They could be joining the world's efforts and contributing to the assistance to people in need of humanitarian aid. Ukrainian grain has been a staple for hundreds of millions around the world. But Russian aggression turned Ukrainians from suppliers of aid to its recipients. And yet they have struggled to do both — to defend themselves and survive while supplying food for others. They are doing that because Ukraine is a responsible member of the international community. It is therefore in the best interests of the international community to continue supporting Kyiv while putting pressure on the perpetrator. Our determination to help those in need must not diminish over time — in fact, just the opposite. We must show that Russia is failing in its hope for our weariness.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson**: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the potential candidate country Georgia, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

I thank the Ecuadorian presidency for the opportunity to address the Council. I also want to thank the briefers, and through them all United Nations staff working tirelessly in Ukraine to the benefit of its population in these very trying times.

At the outset I want to once again reiterate the EU's resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations. I also reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's

independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its inherent right to self-defence. I would like to elaborate on two points. First, that Russia's targeting of Ukrainian critical infrastructure is unacceptable and must stop; and secondly, that the EU is fully engaged in efforts to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of Russia's aggression.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has confirmed that, to date, more than 10,000 civilians have been killed and more than 18,500 have been injured since Russia launched its full-scale invasion. Ukraine has reported that 365 educational institutions have been destroyed, with a further 3,428 damaged. Two weeks ago in the Chamber (see S/PV.9483), the United Nations provided an extensive list of Russia's aerial attacks across Ukraine and warned that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure could escalate further during the upcoming winter, with dire effects for millions of Ukrainians. And how did Russia respond to that? On Holodomor Remembrance Day, it launched its most extensive drone attack on Kyiv yet, and it has stepped up attacks on Ukraine's energy grid again, while temperatures drop below freezing.

Russia's ongoing systematic air strikes against civilian objects and critical infrastructure in Ukraine are unacceptable and must stop. Such intentional attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure add to the growing evidence of war crimes, as reported by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression against Ukraine and committing other most serious crimes under international law.

EU member States have provided temporary protection to 4 million Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russia's aggression. In the face of Russia's continued attacks, we are intensifying the provision of humanitarian and civil protection assistance to Ukraine, including equipment such as power generators, power transformers, mobile heating stations and high-voltage and lighting equipment, to help Ukraine and its people face yet another winter at war.

According to the 2023 United Nations humanitarian response plan, 11.1 million people are food-insecure in Ukraine. This is a country that, before Russia's aggression, was the world's breadbasket, producing food for more than 400 million people worldwide. We strongly

condemn the destruction and illegal appropriation by Russia of agricultural production in Ukraine. In response, the EU has stepped up its aid, providing €785 million in support to those most vulnerable in Ukraine, especially in hard-to-reach areas. That allows our humanitarian partners to provide essential services such as cash assistance, food, water, shelter, health care, education in emergencies, psychosocial support and protection. Ensuring humanitarian access remains critical, and we call on Russia to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas under its temporary military control. We commend the brave efforts by humanitarian organizations and their personnel to deliver assistance despite the very hostile environment.

Ukraine is today the most heavily mined country in the world. The contamination of landmines and remnants of war left behind by Russia's armed forces poses not only a serious obstacle to relief and aid-delivery efforts, but also a serious threat to the lives of civilians, especially children.

The humanitarian consequences of Russia's aggression are not limited to Ukraine. Russia's deliberate attacks on Ukraine's grain storage and export facilities, as well as its actions to hinder the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, show that it continues to weaponize food and deliberately undermines global food security. I stress the importance of ensuring security, stability and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, which is vital for the sustainable facilitation of food exports.

The EU supports all efforts, including those of the United Nations, to facilitate exports of Ukraine's grain and other agricultural products to the countries most in need, notably in Africa and the Middle East. We note the increasing use of the Black Sea corridor, managed by the Ukrainian authorities, which has allowed the export of 5 million tons of agricultural products since it was set up in August. The EU welcomed the extension on 25 November of the Grain from Ukraine initiative, to which the European Commission will contribute by providing €50 million to repair Ukraine's port infrastructure. We are also enhancing the capacity of the EU-Ukraine solidarity lanes to facilitate transit and export via land and maritime routes to world markets, which have enabled the export of more than 57 million tons of Ukrainian agricultural products so far. In addition, the EU will continue to deliver on its ambitious response to address global food insecurity.

In conclusion, I emphasize that the EU will continue to provide strong financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. We will continue our intensified diplomatic outreach efforts and cooperation with Ukraine and other countries to ensure the widest possible international support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's peace formula.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

**Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes** (Latvia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three Baltic States, namely, Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia.

I would first like to thank the Ecuadorian presidency of the Security Council for convening of this meeting and for giving me the opportunity to take the floor. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Rajasingham for their briefings today.

The Baltic States once again strongly condemn Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and call on Russia to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, enabled by Belarus, is a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Violations by Russia create mistrust and doubts about the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations and the international rules-based system. Russian leadership, military personnel, perpetrators and accomplices will be held accountable for the crimes committed in and against Ukraine. In that regard, we call for the establishment of a special international tribunal to ensure that justice is delivered. Impunity for war crimes cannot be tolerated.

The war will soon enter its third year, bringing pain and suffering for the people of Ukraine. As the global attention focuses increasingly on the crisis in the Middle

East, Russia has increased its shelling of Ukrainian civilians and attempts to destroy civilian infrastructure. In recent weeks, we have witnessed massive attacks on Ukraine and its capital, Kyiv. In a six-hour air raid on 25 November, Russia launched its largest drone attack on Kyiv, using 75 Shahed drones. The drones caused serious damage and electricity-line shutdowns while the winter is setting in. Sadly, Russia used similar tactics last year. We strongly condemn Russia's criminal actions in Ukraine attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure.

On the same day, the world commemorated the ninetieth anniversary of the Holodomor, and we honoured all victims of that artificially provoked hunger. Today we are once again witnessing Russia commit crimes against the Ukrainian people by using food as a weapon. Russia weaponizes food by shelling Ukrainian grain storage sites, energy infrastructure and trade routes, in addition to contaminating Ukraine's agricultural land and blatantly stealing Ukrainian grain. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has a global impact, and the shortage of Ukrainian produce is felt especially by the countries that are already facing food insecurity. We must therefore implement Ukraine's peace formula in order to jointly achieve food security goals and address the global food crisis.

The Baltic States affirm their solidarity with Ukraine and their readiness to support it politically, economically, financially and militarily for as long as it takes. The international community must firmly stand together against Russia's attack on the norms and principles of international law. We call on all Member States to continue to provide all support necessary to Ukraine. Protecting the Charter and standing up for international law is a must to preserve the multilateral system based on the rule of law. And there is no place for any kind of logic of "might makes right" in the twenty-first century.

*The meeting rose at noon.*